



Community Schools: Jarius' Story

At Marvine Elementary School in Bethlehem, eight-year-old Jarius and his mother Trinity are among more than 300 families who access a food bank located inside the school building each week. They visit the school twice a week to pick up grab-and-go meals and bags filled with food from the school's pantry.

"I love my Community School. We're all in this together. I know that people care about Jarius. If he needs something, they're going to help him," said Trinity as she collected a bag for one of her neighbors.

Jarius is one of 16,800 students served across 28 Community Schools in the Greater Lehigh Valley.

"We are trying to cover every area we can to help our students be successful. Being that hub that they can go to really makes them comfortable with the school. They know when they walk through that door, they're going to be loved. We can help them, so the students are going to be happier, have less trauma in their lives and be more successful in school," said Principal Eric Fontanez.

To drive students' academic success, Community Schools focus on meeting kids' basic needs. They provide on-site resources such as clothing closets, food pantries and health care services. They also offer expanded after-school programs, host family events outside of school hours and become a connection for any needs a student or family may have.

"We want to make sure the kids have everything they need to learn. We cannot expect kids to learn how to read if they're hungry, if someone in their family needs mental health services or they don't have a place to sleep," said Community School Coordinator Cesar Cordova.

As a result, Community Schools report:

- Improved reading and math scores
- Increased student attendance
- Better parent engagement
- More student participation

When you support United Way of the Greater Lehigh Valley's Community Building Fund, you help students like Jarius get the resources they need to succeed whether they're in the classroom or learning at home.

